DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL JOHN CUDDY, U.S. ARMY NATIONAL GUARD, COMMANDING OFFICER, REGIONAL POLICE ADVISORY COMMAND-SOUTH IN KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN, VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM AFGHANISTAN TIME: 9:02 A.M. EDT DATE: WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2008

(Note: Please refer to www.dod.mil for more information.)

LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Hello. I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable for Wednesday, July 9th. My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg, and I'm with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating our call today.

And a note to our bloggers on line today: Please remember to clearly state your name and blog or organization that you are with, in advance of your questions.

And then, with that -- who's joining us?

Q This is Troy Steward from Bouhammer. LT. CRAGG: Okay. Great. Thank you. Troy, you're number two in the line. I'll go to you -- the second person for questions.

And with that, thank you all for joining us today. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Colonel John Cuddy. He's the commanding officer of the Regional Police Advisory Command. Sir, if you want to start with any comments.

COL. CUDDY: Yeah. Good morning. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today on the Bloggers Roundtable. I really appreciate the opportunity.

As Jennifer stated, I'm Colonel John Cuddy, the commander for the Regional Police Advisory Command-South here in Kandahar, Afghanistan. My responsibilities -- I oversee all of the U.S. military transition teams across southern Afghanistan. Our primary mission is to train, mentor and advise and equip the Afghan National Police within my area of operations.

I've been here about three months, and I've seen a lot of positive things occurring and a lot of challenges, to be honest with you, that we're working daily to overcome.

A main concentration right now is the focused district development plan, or as we call it, FDD, of the Afghan National Police. This program is being executed across the country, but for us in the south, I think it's a larger undertaking, one which we're extremely proud of. But we do endeavor

every day to continue it because it's a great program and we're seeing positive results.

Let me briefly explain what the FDD program is for you. It takes Afghan police out of their districts and replaces them in specific districts within -- we replace them with Afghan Civil Order Police, or ANCOP as we call them, who are a highly trained, effective police force. It's a national asset. We send the police out of their district, through a(n) eight-week training cycle at the regional training center, which is located here in Kandahar, and we turn them into a more effective, more professional, highly disciplined fighting force, back into their communities as members of the Afghan National Police.

Along the way, certainly, we have some challenges but we have many successes here, too. One of my biggest challenges is not having enough U.S. police mentors or trainers or teams here in Southern Afghanistan. I really need more of them. And if we had more of them, we'd be able to train the ANP at a faster rate and get them into their communities more quickly to be able to provide security and conduct counterinsurgency operations at the local level.

There's a huge gap between those who are educated in Afghanistan and those who are not. That hinders us somewhat in our progress of building a professional police force. Many of the patrolmen we deal with are illiterate or innumerate which, of course, hinders the development of a good, solid noncommissioned or officer corps in the police force.

Part of the difficulties we see in developing a strong NCO corps is -- well, part of it's a cultural issue. For years the Afghan mentality based off of the old Soviet model, where NCOs really weren't used to their full potential. We're trying to change that mentality. It's clearly a struggle for us, so it's taking some time to overcome that mental shift.

I'm sure many of our listeners today know that we're fighting an insurgency in Afghanistan, and the battle is truly for the population. The Afghan National Police, in my opinion, are front line in that battle. We're also trying to help the Afghans rebuild their country from years of war and destruction from the ground up. A lot of effort to build roads, hospitals, schools, wells and much more in the local communities.

Part of the challenge in creating a professional, dedicated police force, you know, while you're also conducting security operations in a high-threat environment -- because we're still fighting with Taliban on a daily basis, especially down here in the south. There's a huge fight down here in the south. And the ANP is fighting the Taliban while learning how to be policemen, in addition to rebuilding their country. So it is a challenge.

One of the other challenges in Afghanistan is overcoming corruption, which is a big issue and has been for a while. We struggle with that daily. But we're trying to help the Afghans change that mentality altogether in a more positive way. The Afghans have gotten by for a long time by using corrupt practices, and we're trying to teach them,show them what's best for their country and the people of Afghanistan, and what's best for them doesn't involve corruption on a daily basis.

More importantly, our successes are really helping the Afghans to forge ahead in providing protection and security for the Afghan people, and that's the bottom line. The people are the front line of this battle. If we can get them

to trust in the government and trust in the police, I think we'll come a long way in winning this counterinsurgency.

If I can step back a little bit and talk FDD, since its inception we've graduated nearly 800 Afghan National Police down here in the south. Additionally, we have trained and have continued to train and mentor the Regional Training Center staff and cadre in areas like deliberate decision-making processes, logistics handling, you know, hoping to bring them along where the effects will be seen for a long time and, you know, they'll be able to do this more and more by themselves.

We're seeing a lot of indicators, some of it is very anecdotal, but we see it at the tactical level that the Afghan national police are graduating from FTD and are more accepted, more effective and more respected within their local districts, which is a positive step because that local community again is the focus for this counterinsurgency.

We're seeing the Afghans come to the police with their concerns more, providing tips of where the Taliban are, where their weapons caches are. In the past, they were very passive or even supportive. They may have gone to the Afghan national army soldiers to say something or they wouldn't say anything at all. They just hoped it didn't affect them.

Additionally, we're seeing successful initiatives where we integrate the ANA, the Afghan National Army with the Afghan national police in a joint effort. One of the programs we have throughout the country, but I'm just talking about the south is the operational coordination center concept -- it's a base plan for what we call in the United States an incident control system across the provinces, the region and the nation. It's designed to provide quick intelligence, situational awareness for both the ANA and the ANP and it allows for a quicker, more coordinated, more effective response to local incidents. This, of course, is a challenge. It's in the developmental stages, but it's showing great promise and after a lot of deliberations with the ANA and the ANP, they've come a long way and they've kind of bought into this program and are pushing it forward also.

Part of the FTD program also is equipping the Afghan national police. All the graduates through the process -- they return to their districts with their proper uniforms, which provides them with a great sense of pride. They return to their districts with their personal equipment, additional force protection items. They leave here, the training center, better equipped and better trained and they're provided with, you know, equipment for their units, the vehicles, the radios, the proper weapons and ammunition that they're required to do their jobs.

All of this combined together ensures the Afghan national police can do their jobs as best as possible in very difficult situations. The FTD also includes the upgrade of local police facilities, including the provincial headquarters, the district centers and the local stations. We provide them with force protection, operational capabilities and, quite candidly, a better standard of living in these stations. This allows them to look like a better, more professional force. It allows them to feel like a more professional force and all these together allow them to perform like a professional police force.

As you can see, we've come a long way, but we still have a ways to go. The Afghans are proud of their heritage. They truly are tough fighters. In my

opinion, they just needed someone to show them the right direction and help them stay on top of their goals. They really want to do the right thing. A lot of these young kids that come into the training center, I get some pride in talking with them when they say I'm proud to help myself and help my wife and help my family and help my country. The Afghans want to do the right thing. They simply have been hampered for years of war and strife and sometimes, quite honestly, bad leadership.

The Afghans are focused on providing governance for their own country and I believe the police force is the first step in providing that for them. We need to be here with our coalition forces and our police mentor teams and if we had more police mentor teams, we could do it sooner rather than later.

I appreciate your time and letting me talk and your attention and I certainly welcome any of your questions.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. We're going to start with Megan first. Megan, do you have any questions for Colonel Cuddy?

Q I do. How -- which Afghans and how are they chosen for the national police? Is there a vetting process? And have you run into any problems with Taliban sympathizers or supporters infiltrating the national police?

COL. CUDDY: Well, Megan, let me answer the first question. There is a vetting process, it's part of FTD, the first stages of it are the recruiting piece of that where they go into the local communities or the surrounding areas or even, you know, a broader range so we get a larger ethnic mix. But the Afghan MOI or the Ministry of Interior goes through that. They do a vetting process. Once they're accepted through that vetting process, when they get to the regional training site, the regional training center here. You know, we go through biometrics and there have been cases where people have shown that they're not the right people for the police force so they are let go or discharged from the program and that happens at the very beginning.

So there is a vetting process that the Afghan MOI is in charge of and once they get to the regional training center, there is a process and we have weeded people out for various things, maybe not a Taliban sympathizer, but drug use or they've shown up as a low level criminal. So there is a vetting process.

Q Thank you. LT. CRAGG: Megan, do you have another follow on question? Or do you want me to go to Troy?

Q If Troy has and I do have another one, but I'll wait.

Q You can go ahead. I have a few.

Q Oh, okay. Colonel, you talked about the Afghan national police being on the front lines of the counterinsurgency. Is that in cooperation with -- I'm assuming it's in cooperation with U.S. forces. And do they have, does the Afghan national police have the heart and minds of the population? Is there a trust built between these two?

COL. CUDDY: Well, I'll be honest with you, Megan. It's a great question because the Afghan national police have an awful reputation many times in these local communities, and as I talked about FTD, we put in the Afghan national civil order police or the ANCOP. They rotate into the area and we pull

the police out. Anecdotally, we have heard that the local population says we love the ANCOP; don't take them away, you know. These are the good police. But once we put our FTD trained police back into that local district, we're getting feedback that, hey, this is really working. They're more professional. They're not stealing from us. They're not shaking us down on the road.

The police are learning a lot of human rights training, ethical training and for the first time, some of these guys are getting what it is to be a police officer, what it is to serve and protect -- (inaudible) -- the U.S. So we're getting very positive feedback from the local communities with our FTD trained police officers.

On your point of are we with U.S. forces? That's the police mentor teams that go out with these police in the district, but here in the south we also have coalition forces in the different provinces, you know, we have a community in the British, Romanian and Dutch through this and they're really the kinetic force, but the PNCs are the combat advisors assisting the police side by side.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you. Okay, Troy, I believe you're next if you want to ask any questions for Colonel Cuddy.

Q Okay. Thank you, sir. How are you doing? This is Troy Steward from Bouhammer.com.

COL. CUDDY: How are you doing, first sergeant? You gave a briefing up at Fort Drum before I came so we've met. Okay. You've darned me out. Roger, sir.

Q I have a few questions here for you since you kind of already know my background then. Are the ANCOPs, are the ANCOP teams a response to the fact that the ANP auxiliary and contracts were resistant to attend the academy? Or was it more of a response or were they put in place for something else? Because I know they weren't in place a little over a year ago. COL. CUDDY: Well, first sergeant, that's a little tough for me to answer that question because I got here three months ago and the ANCOP -- (inaudible) -- organization, and quite honestly, I don't know what the genesis of the ANCOP was.

Q Okay.

COL. CUDDY: Unfortunately, I can't answer your question.

Q Okay. I understand. I was afraid when I'm thinking about you being on the ground for three months, I wasn't sure if you had the history. Okay.

Another one is -- the big problem with ANA, many problems with the ANA are a little bit worse than the ANP because the ANP has had U.S. advisors and mentors for such a shorter time, one of those being the corruption and things like that. The second one, a root of that being no USMJ, of course, it wouldn't be a USMJ for the police, but any kind of enforcement tool or punishment system, negative reinforcement being in put in place for the ANP to show them that they need to be accountable and they need not to shakedown -- (inaudible) -- truck drivers, make sure they don't give their -- (inaudible) -- away. Is anything like that talked about being put in place yet?

COL. CUDDY: With, you know, shaking down the people, again, the training at the RTC, the regional training centers -- a lot of human rights, ethical training and, honestly, I think it's the first time these people have heard this is what a cop is supposed to do and not to do. The enforcement of that, absolutely, that's where our PMTs at the regional level or the provincial level are, you know, helping the chief of police enforce the rule of law. You know, in Afghanistan, there is not that whole rule of law layering system, you know, very systematic, judge and jury process there. But that's handled at the local level. We have had occasions where, you know, the chief of police is arrested, some of his officers for doing these things. Quite honestly, sometimes when that provincial chief of police arrests one of his officers, there's a lot of political pressure or a lot of governance pressure to, hey, let the guy go, don't do that. Some of that tribalism is deeply embedded in this culture and that remains and that's why we're here side-by-side with these guys trying to do the right thing, trying to get them trained right and enforce the standards.

Regarding equipment, selling equipment, the accountability piece -- I mentioned that we're training the regional training center -- (inaudible) -- on logistics operations. We do that with the police at the provincial headquarters and we really, we overwatch their logistics system. We account for it, but we also make sure that they are accounting for it. You know, are we making sure we have account for every widget? Yeah, that's probably impossible even in the U.S. Army.

But we are pushing that. That's part of the mentorship program and hold people accountable for their actions and make them accountable for maintenance and keeping their equipment.

Q All right. Thank you, sir. Another one. Have you had a chance or have your teams had a chance to start to focus on what I would call advanced police techniques -- interrogation, detainee ops, evidence handling? Or are you still focused on pretty much basic infantry and combat type tactics?

COL. CUDDY: At the regional training center, it really is basic police efforts at the basic course. There are advanced courses that people can go to after they've graduated from FTD basic. There are advanced courses in that in firearms and the typical things we would say are police things. Now, for the light infantry skills that we're training at the RTC, that is not part of the program of instructions during the day. The light infantry survival tactics, that's conducted -- we have a PMT that comes to the regional training center and they conduct that in what we call the after hours training.

So they go through the daily training, which is basic police stuff and then at night or early morning, we're going through those basic army skills because they're fighting, you know, they're not police officers like we have in the United States. They are on the front line and have to be able to survive against attacks from the Taliban, but they are getting that advanced training in later stages, but they have to be a graduate of the basic FTD course.

Q Well, I'm going to keep going if I can.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. I just want to make sure, Megan, do you have any questions before Troy keeps on going?

Q Actually, I have to jump off line but thank you, Colonel Cuddy, for briefing us on this. I do appreciate it.

COL. CUDDY: Sure, Megan. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Megan. Okay. Go ahead, Troy.

Q With the FTD and the new focus you have in the RTC -- (inaudible) -- are there civilian agencies still very much involved? Are they helping out? Are they able to be out there and go outside the -- (inaudible) -- and get on hand, on eye mentoring with strong police skills?

COL. CUDDY: Absolutely. It's a regional training center. DynCorp is the primary instructor as well. The Afghans are the instructors, but DynCorp oversees the instruction here. They validate, minus the PMTs that do the light infantry skills after hours and before hours training, but DynCorp is an integral part of this program, the FTD program. Not only do they do the training here, but based on the security assessment of DynCorp personnel, they will go into the districts and we've had great success working with DynCorp since I've been on the ground.

I think they're a professional organization. They do great work with our teams and our discussion is it's one team on site here and they've gotten into many of the districts that we have people, even some of the ones that, you know, all of the ones in the south are pretty hazardous, but even the ones that we consider more hazardous, we've got some DynCorp teams to truly embed with our teams. They're not just driving around checking in. They're living with our PMTs and we're working side-by-side with them.

Q Okay. My last question sir and I'm kind of keeping this one for last. I'm just curious -- recently, you've had some serious losses there and recently losing four great individuals on your PMTs, of course, three of them were sons of New York that we're mourning the loss of. I'm just wondering how you, yourself as the leader, all your leaders down below you and your PMT soldiers and officers in the fields in how they're coping and how they're taking time out to reflect? Is it kind of making them more focused? Has it awakened anybody, maybe take away some complacency? How are they dealing with all that?

COL. CUDDY: Well, obviously, that was an emotional event for us. Great soldiers from New York and Colonel Walton, Lieutenant Colonel Walton from the active army. Just fantastic soldiers. Fantastic leaders. It hit all of us pretty hard, but we immediately, you know, because we've got to continue the mission. So we immediately -- we pulled the troops in that were affected, all the Kandahar teams. We got them together with the chaplain. We used the combat stress teams here at Kandahar. We made sure that they understood that we have the immediate response and the support system to help them, as well as the long-term support system because the Army isn't just thinking about today; they're thinking about, you know, in the future for these guys.

You know it's tough and every one of us deals with it a little differently, but the important thing is that we get people together, let them know that we're there to support them and that we have the systems in place and the professionals in place. When I talk to the troops, I let them know that, you know, these four individuals would want to continue this mission. They wouldn't want us to turtle. They'd want us to keep fighting and doing the right thing because they believed in the mission and we do.

Q All right, sir. Thank you. I appreciate you answering all my questions, especially the last one. I know it wasn't easy and it wasn't easy for me to ask, as one of those was one of my soldiers once. But I think it's

important that the families and the Americans hear that and hear that the military cares about its own and reaches out and makes sure that their head is in the game and that they take time to grieve and they move on.

Thank you.

COL. CUDDY: That's all I got. Any other questions?

Q No, sir, none at all.

LT. CRAGG: Colonel Cuddy, thank you so very much for joining us today, and I know Andrew Lubin, he wanted to be on the call and he just visited Afghanistan. He was down there, I think, for a month. And so if he has any follow on questions, I'll just shoot him over your way.

COL. CUDDY: Not a problem. LT. CRAGG: He just recently came back. So with that, thank you. We have some great questions from Troy and also from Megan. As we wrap up today's call, Colonel Cuddy, you had a great intro when you answered some great questions. Do you have any closing comments for today?

COL. CUDDY: You know, First Sergeant Stewart kind of hit it on there and it's good to let the American people know what we're doing over here. Honestly, I think, this is the right place to be. We're doing the right mission. These soldiers from New York, the 27th Brigade and all those who are filling in, assisting the 27th are doing a great job over here. They're highly dedicated soldiers and I think Afghanistan kind of gets puts aside in the newspapers and the thoughts -- (inaudible). We've got a lot of solid citizens here doing a good job, you know, but as I started at the front of it, it would be great to have more police mentor teams and embedded tactical trainers with the Army side of this because we are really a force multiplier and it's not just fighting the war, it's getting the Afghans to fight the war.

So, you know, eventually, America can back out of this monitor and let the Afghans fight this war because it truly is theirs.

Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. And today's program will be available online at the bloggers link on dod.mil and where you'll be able to access the story from today's call, along with source documents such as the colonel's bio, the audio file and the print transcript.

Again, thank you Colonel Cuddy for attending today and speaking with our bloggers, the bloggers today.

With that, that concludes today's event and feel free to disconnect anytime.

Thank you, sir.

END.